

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BLOCK ORGANIZATION AS A
METHOD OF ELICITING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN URBAN RENEWAL

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 1960

R-11 TP-43

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Significance of the Study.	1
Purpose of the Study	9
Method of Procedure.	9
Scope and Limitations.	10
II. BACKGROUND ON AGENCY AND HARLEM PARK	11
Establishing the Agency.	12
Ethnic Pattern in Harlem Park.	12
III. FACTORS IN BLOCK ORGANIZATION FORMATION.	14
Use of Fact Finding Activities	14
Focusing Discontent.	16
Block Leadership	18
IV. CRITERIA WHICH AFFECT BLOCK ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS	20
Individual Member Participation Factors.	20
Agency Participation Factors	25
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.	27
APPENDIXES	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY	41

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

A major problem facing our urban civilization is the slums situation in American cities. "Slums are no accident; they have grown and spread because of local inaction and neglect."¹ National attention was first focused on this condition in the early thirties at which time Federal laws were passed creating large scale public works programs to provide employment for the masses left idle by the "economic depression" of the late twenties.² Included in this program was a provision to construct public housing projects for low-income families.

In order to qualify for such a project, "cities had to destroy a number of sub-standard dwelling units equal to the number of dwelling units contained in the housing project."³ The first public housing project under this law was completed in 1937.⁴

Although the unemployment problem which precipitated governmental entry into the field of housing was resolved, the housing situation became more severe. Industrial expansion brought about by World War II and the Korean

¹Urban Renewal - what it is, Housing and Home Finance Agency, (Washington, 1957), p. 4.

²The United States Housing Act of 1937, National Housing Agency, (Washington, 1938).

³Ibid.

⁴The Low-Rent Public Housing Program, Housing and Home Finance Agency, (Washington, 1951), p. 6.

conflict added to the housing problem. The introduction of public housing projects in some communities reduced the number of sub-standard housing to such an extent that it appeared as if progress was being made. Nevertheless, the rapid spread of blight and decay aroused citizen interest in this problem on a national scale. In an effort to find a solution, the President appointed an Advisory Committee of Housing Policies and Programs in 1953 to study the matter and make recommendations as to how it could be resolved.¹ This committee found among other things "that new slums were forming faster than old ones were being cleared, and called for a program to prevent as well as clear slums--and to rehabilitate areas that could still be saved."²

Acting on the President's request for legislation, Congress enacted the Housing Act of 1954. "This act opened the way to a new total approach to end blight as well as clear slums through using a wide range of community, private and Federal resources in a strongly unified effort."³ Recognizing the important role that citizens play in the development of a community, the Housing and Home Finance Agency made citizen participation one of the seven essential elements in the Nation's urban renewal program.⁴ The "workable Program" was outlined by the Federal government as an aid to cities in developing ways of achieving the seven elements of the national urban

¹Detailed Summary of the Housing Act of 1954, Housing and Home Finance Agency, (Washington, 1954).

²Urban Renewal - what it is, op. cit., p. 5.

³Ibid.

⁴Greda J. Lewis, A Survey on the extent and form of Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal. An Examination of Urban Renewal in New York City. (New York, 1956), p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

renewal program on the local level.¹

Several cities initiated programs that were designed to achieve citizen participation. While each city used a different technique, similar goals were sought. Because of the impact that an urban renewal program could have on a community, interest was immediately focused on finding ways to keep the public informed. Citizen reaction in one community where the public had not been informed about urban renewal produced disastrous results.

It was in 1954 that the City Planning Board publicly announced its general plans for renewal of East Dayton... Strong resentment and hostility developed on the part of many residents toward the renewal program....we have even had violence..In one instance a Chamber of Commerce official was punched in the nose by an angry resident of the area.²

The writer believed that as cities developed programs to achieve citizen participation, unanimity of thought would prevail with regards to the potential in the use of block organizations. As the block organizations came into being, problems of communications developed. The need became apparent for block residents to identify with a large organization such as a neighborhood council with area wide communities to which two blocks could relate. This situation was resolved through citizen participation in the election of block representatives.

The Chicago block organization program in Urban Renewal was started as an outgrowth of a decision made on September, 1950 by the Social Service

¹The Workable Program - what it is, Housing and Home Finance Agency, (Washington, 1955), p. 2.

²Alberg G. Rosenberg, "Principles of Community Organization in an Urban Renewal Program" (Address delivered at a conference on citizen participation, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 12, 1958.), p. 4. (Mimeographed)

Committee of a local organization that was in the process of deciding on a community project for the coming year.¹ After several subsequent meetings during which time other persons became involved, there emerged from this committee an organization known as the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference.²

In January, 1951, the first experimental block meeting was held under leadership of four persons from the Conference.³ Much of the first year's work of the Conference was spent in getting other block groups organized. "Officers of the Conference went from one meeting to another, explaining the Conference objectives and mustering community support."⁴ As the block groups were formed, each selected representatives to the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference.

There were 60 functioning block groups in the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community as of September, 1956. The largest had nearly 150 members, the smallest 14. The area of operation for these groups extends from one apartment building to as much as four city blocks. Common problems rather than an arbitrary rule of size, is usually the factor which determine just how much of an area shall be included in any one group.⁵

¹ Julia Abrahamson, A Neighborhood Finds Itself (New York, 1959), p. 12.

² Ibid.

³ Organization for Block Groups for Neighborhood Improvement: The Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, ACTION. New York: 1956.

⁴ Herbert A. Thelan and Bettie B. Sarchet, Neighbors in Action (Chicago, 1954), Chapter I.

⁵ Julia Abrahamson, op. cit., Chapter I.

Leadership for this program during its first three years of existence¹ was for the most part, handled by volunteers. At the time of this study, the Conference had a full time staff of professional personnel.

Detroit initiated a block organization program one year after citizens began preparatory neighborhood conservation work.² To accomplish this task, the city employed one organizer to serve on the City Plan Commission. In this capacity, he was exposed to a wealth of information on objectives of the city's urban renewal program and also the problem that resulted from having a limited number of personnel available to handle the organizing functions. This personnel problem was resolved by the use of social work volunteers from private agencies. Action which led to this remarkable accomplishment was the favorable response received when the paid organizer delivered an address before the Detroit Federation of Settlements.³ Some background on the program, its objectives, and the organizer's problem of organizing the block clubs were included in his address.⁴ The request for volunteers was made in the form of a challenge.

...Detroit wishes to test the hypothesis that conservation can work with a strong element of citizen participation. The pilot area contains 12,000 people and I am the only organizer employed. Who wants to help in the organization of citizens for blight prevention?⁵

¹Ibid.

²Maurice F. Parkins, Neighborhood Conservation a Pilot Study (Detroit, 1958), p. vii and 93.

³Mel J. Ravitz, "Detroit Social Workers Mobilize Citizen Aid for Urban Renewal," Journal of Housing, XII (July, 1956), p. 232.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

In July and August of 1954, the organization effort began with contacts that had been established mainly through churches in the pilot area. This approach proved too slow.¹ After two months had elapsed, the volunteer workers and paid organizer discussed their experiences and developed another method of approach.²

It was next decided to find a convenient meeting place and invite the residents of just a single block to attend a public meeting of their immediate neighbors. The residents were invited by mail and each was asked to return a self-addressed post card in advance of the meeting indicating whether or not he would be able to attend.³

This method of reaching the people on a block by block basis was rather successful. "By April of 1955, almost every block had been organized."⁴ Formation of a neighborhood council was handled concurrently with organization of the block organizations.

Block organization activity in St. Louis preceeded passage of the 1954 Housing Act by twenty-eight years.⁵ At the time of this study, the city government was working in conjunction with the St. Louis Federation of Block Units, Inc., (An Affiliate of the Urban League) in developing ways of making block clubs more effective. As evidence of the importance that the city administration attached to its block program, Raymond R. Tucker, the

¹Mel J. Ravtiz, "Block That Blight," Adult Leadership (May, 1956).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Op. cit., p. 233.

⁵St. Louis Urban League Block Units Improve Housing and Neighborhoods (National Urban League Publication), The Urban League of St. Louis, August, 1959.

mayor issued a proclamation on April 28, 1958, declaring the period from May 4-9 as "Block Unit Federation Week."¹

When the present concept of urban renewal was officially adopted in St. Louis, the block clubs incorporated this function as part of their program.²

Admittedly, there are seven elements in the "workable program" which require special attention to insure achievement. It is the writer's basic assumption that a city's success with citizen participation might influence, to a large extent, implementation of the remaining six elements in its "workable program." Using the aforementioned assumption as a point of reference, the primary focus of this thesis is the element of citizen participation with particular emphasis on block organization.

The writer was involved as a "Community Organization Advisor" in working with a block group at the "grass roots" level, in the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Project of Baltimore City, Maryland.³ Harlem Park was one of two designated urban renewal areas in Baltimore City.⁴ This city's block organization program was similar to such programs in the other cities previously mentioned with the exception to its handling of the neighborhood council. The issue in question was an appointment by the mayor of two

¹Ibid.

²"Outline of the Program Prospectus for 1957-58" (St. Louis, Missouri, The Urban League of St. Louis, 1956), (Mimeographed).

³Here in after referred to as Baltimore City.

⁴Background of the Harlem Park Neighborhood council and Community Organization in Harlem Park, A Report Prepared as a Prerequisite to the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council Workshop, ed. Roy Borom, (Baltimore, 1959).

Harlem Park residents to serve as chairman and co-chairman of the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council.¹ The criteria by which these persons were selected are not known to the writer. However, one might assume that they were identified as having been actively interested in civic affairs with a long record of constructive service to the community.

Through personal contact with the Harlem Park Neighborhood Council and in conversation with staff persons of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency during his block field work assignment, the writer became convinced that neighborhood council functioning was largely determined by effectiveness of the block organizations from which its representatives were chosen.² Information gathered from all sources related to this subject influenced the writer's belief that citizen participation in development of urban renewal plans contributes to the successful execution of such plans. The problems inherent in this situation should hold both interest and meaning to the field of social work. This is especially true for better citizen participation at the "grass roots" level.

Although evidence of sporadic attempts to eliminate slums had been made by some cities over the years, it was not until passage of the 1954 Housing Act that a nation wide Urban Renewal Program was developed. Because citizen participation is a mandatory requirement of urban renewal, cities have made attempts to involve citizens in their programs through adopting some form of "grass roots" approach using a block structure.

¹Ibid.

²Here in after referred to as BURHA.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of block organization as a method of eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal. In studying the methods it was hoped that the various skills necessary might become explicit.

Method of Procedure

The historical method was utilized for collecting data on the early development of block organization programs in Baltimore City, while participant observation was used in block 98 to gather facts on organizing activities in an area where this type of program had not been previously attempted. The library method was used to secure data on block organization programs from urban renewal agencies in cities other than Baltimore. Further information on block organization in Baltimore City was secured through interviews of members who had experienced varying degrees of participation in these organizations. The interviewing technique was employed to solicit facts about their membership experiences. A random sample of the members in three block organizations was selected for the interviews.

Interpretation of data was initiated during the exploratory process of gathering the facts and sorting them. This step was followed by a logical arrangement of data into groupings which have common and/or mutual relationships. As questions were detected which could not be resolved through the process of re-checking, data responsible for stimulating them were set aside either temporarily or permanently.

Scope and Limitations

This study was limited to a six months period during which time the writer was also engaged in training activities which involved subjects other than block organizations. The criteria as to number and type of block organizations from which data could be used in this study are as follows:

- a. primary focus of block organization must not be of a social nature.
- b. the block organization must be in an urban renewal area.
- c. the block organization should include specific major improvements to be accomplished by either private or public resources during the execution phase of the urban renewal program for the block.
- d. only one such group should represent the block on area wide organizations that have programs relating to urban renewal.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND ON AGENCY AND HARLEM PARK

Official concern for improvement in the standard of living for its citizens is not new to Baltimore City. For the past twenty years this city had worked to abolish and abate its slums. During that period, the citizens of Baltimore had witnessed their city advance through three major phases of housing improvement. The first phase, Public Housing, was an inadequate attempt to abolish slum areas. This effort served only to transfer the slum sections and slum dwellers from one geographical location of the city to another without rectifying the casual factors. The second phase, the Redevelopment Program, meant the clearing of the land and the leasing or selling of it to either private redevelopers and/or city and state agencies for commercial, industrial or residential uses.¹ The third phase was a concentrated program of law enforcement handled by the Housing Bureau of the Health Department.² The Health Department's objective was to force property owners to bring their property up to requirements of existing codes. However, it was not until Congress passed the Housing Act of 1954 that Baltimore approached its housing problems on a broad scale. A program of improvement was undertaken encompassing both physical and social needs of citizens on a neighborhood basis. Such a program, of

¹The Legal Basis for Redevelopment, Baltimore Redevelopment Commission, 1955, Baltimore, Maryland.

²Report of the Urban Renewal Study Board, An Examination of Urban Renewal Activities of Baltimore City, ed. William L. C. Wheaton, Chairman (Baltimore, 1956).

necessity, required some far reaching changes in city administration.

Establishing the Agency

Public officials in Baltimore City reacted promptly to all provisions of the 1954 Housing Act and established means to implement them on the local level. The mayor appointed an urban renewal study board in 1955 to study all facets of the slum problem. On the basis of this board's recommendations, Baltimore enacted a new city ordinance which gave authority for creation of the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency.¹ This agency adopted a policy of operation that encompassed the seven elements of a "workable program" as required by the Housing Act of 1954.² More detailed information on the growth of BURHA, designation of Harlem Park as the first urban renewal area, and a history of the different uses made of all the structures in Harlem Park was included in a recent agency publication.³

Ethnic Pattern in Harlem Park

The early settlers were largely German and Irish immigrant industrial laborers. Following the Civil War, Slavs, Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews settled in great numbers. In the pre-civil war period only thirteen per cent of its population were Negroes; after the war this number increased to twenty per cent. At one time during this period, the large town houses

¹City Ordinance Number 692, Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, Baltimore, 1956).

²Ibid.

³Harlem Park and Its People and Their Homes, Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency, (Baltimore, 1959).

on the perimeter of the blocks housed wealthy whites, while the alleys housed the servants or laborers.¹

At the time of this study, Harlem Park had over ninety-nine per cent Negro occupancy, with an estimated population of 18,000.²

¹The Social Make-up of the Harlem Park Community, An Agency Report for 1958, Housing Authority of Baltimore City.

²Op. cit.

CHAPTER III

FACTORS IN BLOCK ORGANIZATION FORMATION

There are specific factors in the process of formation which determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a newly developed block organization. In this chapter, the writer identified such factors through describing his personal experiences in the capacity of a "Community Organization Advisor" with BURHA assigned the task of organizing a block organization for the residents of block 98 of the Harlem Park Urban Renewal Area in Baltimore City. While this service was an asset to the process of block organization formation in the foregoing example, the writer wishes to emphasize the fact that such services are not a necessity when forming a block organization.

Use of Fact Finding Activities

The first factor contributing to block organization effectiveness is the Block Worker's knowledge about the socio-cultural orientation of perspective block members, their economic status, the conditions of their homes, and any environmental conditions seen by them as constituting a community problem. Such facts may be acquired through studying agency files on the area as was done in the case of block 98. In preparation for that assignment, the writer learned that in 1956 Baltimore City adopted a "twenty year program geared toward elimination of blight and decay."¹ Concurrently with the collection of data about Harlem Park, BURHA conducted an extensive public relations program that was designed to educate the

¹Report of the Urban Renewal Study Board, op. cit.

general population on the merits of urban renewal. Emphasis was placed on those phases of the program that had been prepared especially for Harlem Park residents. In the process of conducting such an extensive program, contact was established between community residents and staff personnel of BURHA. Thus was created a two-way system in which both groups gave as well as received facts.

An observation tour of the area concluded the first phase of writer's fact finding activities in block 98. This tour introduced factor number two, "resident response to the idea of organization." The technique of interviewing was utilized to ascertain the reaction of block 98 residents to long range planning for organized community improvements. The interviews served a two fold purpose. They provided an opportunity for writer to visit with the residents in their homes and also gave them an opportunity to engage in informal conversation with an "outsider" about the problems of their area. Although agency records indicated that city employees concerned with urban renewal had been working in this general area since 1956, no prior contact had been established with the residents of block 98 for the specific purpose of organizing a block organization.

An important observation that resulted from home visiting was that the residents were cognizant of the fact that some of their problems required immediate attention. Because the task of solving them appeared both difficult and time consuming, their outlook on the possibility of community improvement was one of apathy. This condition is not confined to Baltimore.

Sarchet writes,

....Indifference and anomynity may be defenses which the urban person adopts because he feels helpless to bring about changes in the city, and it is less painful to do nothing than to try and be disappointed.¹

A factor contributing to general apathy among the Negro population of Baltimore City had been a failure of previous city improvement programs to increase the supply of housing available for open occupancy.²

Resident response to the idea of organization is seen by writer as a significant factor in block organization effectiveness. If positive, it can be a great asset in the block organization's effective accomplishment of its mission. Whereas a negative response will have the opposite effect.

Focusing Discontent

A block organization is not imposed on the residents by some "outside force" such as a worker, neighborhood council or any agency. It should come into being only after the residents sense a need for such an organization. To give an illustration of this condition, writer again called upon the block 98 situation for an example of factor number three. This factor has to do with existence of "the sense of belonging" that block residents should have for their block organization rather than the feeling of being "a part from" it. Where the residents have a positive feeling for their block, the initial nucleus of common interest can be developed without difficulty. King stated, "What counts is the intensity of the enthusiasm which unites the individual elements and their joint ability to

¹Bettie B. Sarchet, Block Groups and Community Change (Chicago, 1955), p. 95.

²Report of the Urban Renewal Study Board, op. cit.

to attract others to the group."¹ The writer further believed that the feeling of belonging that members have toward their block organization is, in a large measure, influenced by circumstances and events surrounding development. Therefore, the purpose for organization should have as one of its objectives the resolving of some major issue in which a majority of the block residents are interested. Such was the case in block 98.

A majority of block 98 residents expressed discontent over the presence of a rag baling plant in their block. See Appendix A. Aside from the noise it produced, this plant contaminated the atmosphere with lint throughout the year.² Writer used the general discontent with this situation as an issue on which to focus interest in the need for organizing. Ross's comment on a block worker in such a role was,

....The professional worker helps as an enabler, by awakening and focusing discontent about community conditions....Gradually he seeks to focus thought on problems which seem to be shared in the community. The worker's role at this point is that of a catalytic agent.³

Where an atmosphere prevails in the block that something is being done on a local level to resolve an outstanding problem which existed prior to the introduction of urban renewal, the block organization can work from a position of strength in dealing with the problem of citizen participation.

¹Clarence King, Organizing for Community Action (New York, 1948), p. 15.

²"First Meeting of Block Residents of Block 98," Worker's Report for the Period from January 25-26, 1960. Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency.

³Murray G. Ross, Community Organization (New York, 1955), pp. 211-12.

What problems the residents experience in the development of a sound organizational structure can be resolved with decreasing difficulty as a greater number of the block organization members recognize its potential.

The election of block representatives to serve on a larger neighborhood organization can be handled with minimum difficulty if the prevailing discontent is properly focused. This membership is necessary for the block organization because the practical requirements of selecting an urban renewal area dictate that a number of blocks be included. When this situation is viewed realistically, it is with the neighborhood council chairman and/or committees that officials from an urban renewal agency deal effectively on urban renewal problems. In view of this administrative requirement, the block organization, because of its limited representation, is not an effective medium through which all citizens may participate directly in urban renewal.

Block Leadership

The element of block leadership is the last factor presented in this chapter. Because of the important role leadership has in determining the effectiveness of a block organization, its significance is a factor that must be recognized throughout an organization's existence. Unlike the other factors, the capability of persons holding leadership positions directly affect citizen participation in urban renewal through either encouraging or discouraging the members from active involvement in the program of their block organization.

The amount of **discipline** and sacrifice required by block members, both individually and collectively, to achieve a high level of efficiency

can be minimized under capable block leadership. Block representatives to neighborhood organizations could likewise function with confidence if their members were explicit about defining the urban renewal issues in which they had an interest. Therefore, unlike the other factors, demands are placed upon those persons in positions of leadership for an ever increasing degree of efficiency.

The assumption is that regardless to the other environmental and/or psychological factors which contribute to block organization effectiveness, they can only do so as the organization continues to exist. In keeping with this line of reasoning, it was the writer's opinion that the four factors mentioned in this chapter, either individually or collectively, can influence the organizing effort to such an extent so as to make block organization formation impossible. If this be the case, no opportunity would present itself to determine whether the block organization is effective or ineffective as a method of eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal.

CHAPTER IV

CRITERIA WHICH AFFECT BLOCK ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

Two general criteria which contributed to an understanding of the block organization's effectiveness or ineffectiveness as a method of eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal are included in this chapter. They are member participation factors and agency participation factors. The member participation factors were taken from three block organizations in Baltimore City, while the material on agency participation factors was collected from several cities throughout the nation excluding Baltimore City. See Appendix B.

Individual Member Participation Factors

A random sample from the membership of three block organizations was selected with the assistance of agency (BURHA) persons who had staff responsibility for those organizations. This assistance was in the formulation of an operational definition for a block organization member and the furnishing of current membership rosters which included the name and address of block organization members in the sample. The definition stated, "any person presently residing in the block and who had attended two or more block meetings was classified as a member of their block organization."

The writer visited all dwelling units in the sample and conducted individual interviews with the occupants on their past and present experiences as block organization members in the respective organizations. There was only one dwelling unit in the sample where writer failed to

establish contact with the occupant. Nine of the other contacts that were established did not result in completed interviews. See Table I.

The order in which the individual member participation factors are presented has no bearing on their relative significance. The first factor observed by writer was the respondent's identification or lack of identification with the block. Initially it was believed that years of residence in present location influenced this factor. However, the facts did not substantiate this belief. It was found that in one of the sample blocks the average number of years of residence was approximately four years. Although the figures were incomplete for the other two blocks in the sample, their denomination suggests an average in excess of ten years. See Table II. The writer was unable to suggest the number of years residence as being ideal to establish identification with a block organization. Resource materials indicate that such an organization's effectiveness with eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal is measured by the extent to which its members actively identify with the block.¹

Relations between families was the second member participation factor analyzed. The criteria for measuring this factor was the number of families in the block respondent knew and acknowledged that a relationship exists between them and his family of more than a casual nature. It was discovered that out of the total number of families residing in block 98 more than two

¹Dynamics of Citizen Participation (National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers Publication), National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, September, 1957.

TABLE I
HOMES VISITED

Block*	Sample	Completed	Moved	Deceased	Unk	Too Busy	Not Home
BF AVE	11	7	0	1	2	1	0
122	11	8	2	0	0	0	1
3114	11	8	3	0	0	0	0

* BF AVE - Brookfield Avenue in Mt. Royal Fremont.
Block # 122 in Harlem Park.
Block # 3 ("3114 Demonstration Block) in Harlem Park.

TABLE II
YEARS OF RESIDENCE

Mt. Royal Fremont Urban Renewal Area			Harlem Park Urban Renewal Area			
Brookfield Avenue			314 Demonstration Block		Block # 122	
Years	Baltimore City	Present Location	Baltimore City	Present Location	Baltimore City	Present Location
Less- 10	1	7	2	3	0	0
10-19	2	0	0	2	0	2
20-29	1	0	1	1	1	4
*30- Over	1	0	3	0	4	2
*All of life	2	0	1	0	3	0
**No- Answer	0	0	1	2	0	0

*Respondents who refused to give a specific number of years.

**Respondents who elected not to answer this question.

years, the respondents from only five dwelling units admitted not knowing any other family in the block. If the factor dealing with relations between families is used as a frame of reference, it would appear to this writer that each block organization has the potential for achieving effectiveness. In exploring the possible value this factor had on block organization effectiveness, it was observed from resource materials that the chances of developing an on going program were greatest in blocks with "considerable homogeneity in social class and housing."¹ In the writer's opinion, these two conditions seemed to have an influence on the attainment of friendly relations between families.

Identification with the block, and the maintenance of friendly relations between families are both factors which may affect block organization functioning either favorably or unfavorably. However, the achievement of citizen participation in urban renewal also require involvement of block organization members in the block program. When the issue of involvement in the block organization program was discussed during the interview, respondents would invariably give a self appraisal of the manner in which they had discharged their membership obligations. In discussing this subject further, writer observed that large scale citizen involvement was an indication of progress, whereas minimum citizen involvement indicated either few accomplishments by a block organization or a complete absence of progress. Because of the important role that citizen involvement plays in block organization functioning, this factor more than any of the others,

¹Bettie B. Sarchet, op. cit., p. 96.

may well determine the effectiveness of such organizations to elicit citizen participation in urban renewal.

Other member participation factors such as age, health, education, civic interest, and pattern of tenure also contribute to the effectiveness of a block organization to accomplish its goals.

Agency Participation Factors

Thus far in this study, the writer has emphasized various aspects of block organization formation and functioning. Being cognizant of the fact that these organizations must identify with some larger organization such as a neighborhood council or an equivalent group, the remaining part of this chapter deals with such agencies.

Writer established contact with both public and private agencies he believed in a position to offer comment on the effectiveness of their programs which served block organizations. See Appendix B and C. Although there were variations in the letters writer submitted to the different agencies, they each received a copy of the criteria on block organization effectiveness. See Appendix D.

The agency participation factor of prime importance to the block organization effectiveness in eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal is that of agency's purpose or mission. While each agency might contribute to the general functioning of a block organization, only those with emphasis on urban redevelopment have any significant affect on citizen involvement in urban renewal and/or the other activities of the block organization.

The availability of agency staff to service the block organization is an agency participation factor determined by budgetary resources. Although the greatest effect from this factor may result through an absence of agency contact with the block organization, its importance can not be underestimated.

The third and last agency participation factor has to do with the capability of agency personnel to function in their role as an enabler. No amount of agency interest, or finance for staff can compensate for the overall effect that this third factor has on the block organization's effectiveness as a method of eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal. The basis for writer's last statement is the fact that in the final analysis, agency contact with the block organization must of necessity be made through a worker. It is at this point of contact that all elements of capability must be brought to bear on the total problem of citizen participation in urban renewal.

The writer's selection of the factors presented in this chapter was based on his belief in the importance they have over block organization functioning. It is assumed that in order for members of a block organization to seriously think in terms of a dynamic program for eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal they must first achieve a high level of efficiency in normal operational procedures. Hopefully, it will then be in a position to do an effective job in gaining citizen involvement in urban renewal.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study on block organization as an effective method for eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal, an attempt was made to ascertain the procedures and the factors which seemed to have bearing on block organization in the urban renewal program. From making this analysis, the writer drew the following conclusions:

1. Urban renewal came into being in 1954 and is a Federal and local program designed to eliminate slum conditions. One of the seven elements in developing a "Workable Program" is citizen participation. In general, cities attempting to gain citizen participation have employed some form of organization. The analysis specifically verified the use of the block in Chicago, Dayton, Detroit, and St. Louis; and focused upon block activities of BURHA in Baltimore City, Maryland.

2. That the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City, upon recommendations of the Urban Renewal Study Board, enacted a new city ordinance in December 1956 which created BURHA. Included within the organizational structure of BURHA was a Community Organization Division that had as one of its responsibilities the development of block organizations in urban renewal areas.

3. Harlem Park became the first urban renewal area of Baltimore City. It was predominately a residential area consisting of thirty-four rectangular blocks. In addition to the large houses on the perimeter of the blocks, there were dwelling units constructed on the narrow alley

streets of the inner blocks.

4. The early racial composition of Harlem Park consisted of Irish, and German industrial laborers, followed by Slavs, Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews. At the time of this study, Harlem Park's population was over ninety-nine per cent Negro.

5. Worker's knowledge about the area and its residents is a factor in block organization formation. This knowledge may be acquired through both reading and observation.

6. Another factor of equal significance in block organization formation is the response of block residents to the idea of organization. Depending upon the manner on how this is done, a worker can detect whether or not there exists a "sense of belonging" to the block organization.

7. While the success or failure of a block organization depends on its members, leadership is a factor of vital importance that can be noticed throughout a block organization's existence. In fact, the contribution of any other factors to block organization formation and operation is largely influenced by the capability of the current block leaders.

8. The extent to which members are willing to become involved in programs of their block organization has a bearing on the effectiveness of these organizations to elicit citizen participation in urban renewal. In analyzing the experiences of block organization members, it was found that identification or lack of identification with the block was good indication of their involvement in its program.

9. Where friendly relations are experienced between a large per cent of the families in a block, this condition represents a positive factor in

the effectiveness of the block organization to elicit citizen participation in urban renewal.

10. Agencies that are community organization focused contribute to block organization effectiveness through direct staff service to these organizations. The availability of funds for such agencies to develop and implement programs of service is a factor which must be realistically resolved to meet current demands for service.

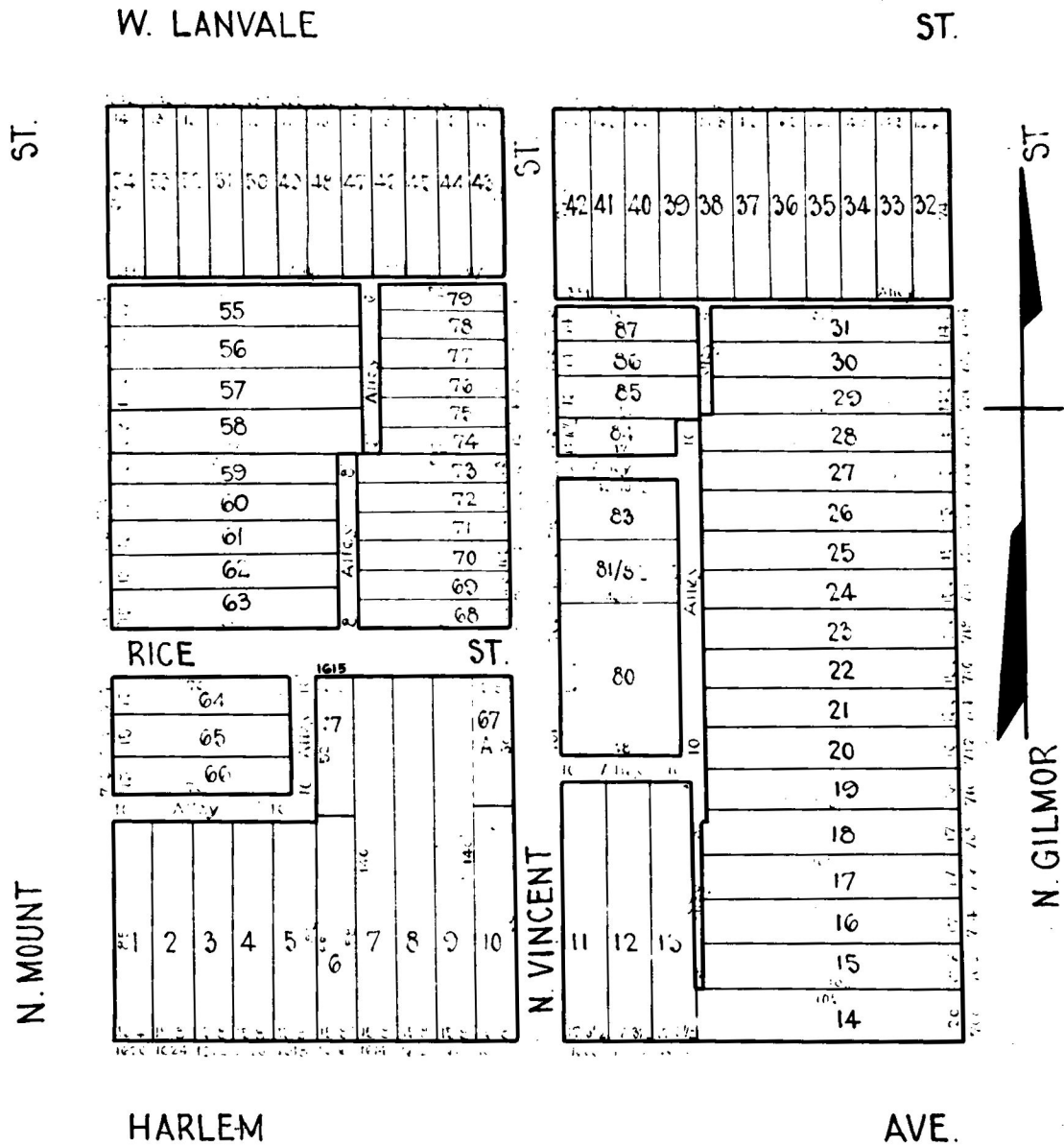
11. The degree of competence achieved by agency staff for effectively dealing with block organizations may well determine the success or failure of its efforts to render a valuable service to the block organization.

12. Finally, effectiveness of block organization as a method of eliciting citizen participation in urban renewal, may ultimately depend upon the extent to which it identifies with some larger organization such as a neighborhood council.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

MAP OF BLOCK 98



- HARLEM AVE.
- Bldg # 17 "Store-front" church
 # 18 " " "
 # 32 Neighborhood grocery store
 # 35 Printing shop
 # 80 Rag-bailing plant

CITY OF BALTIMORE
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
 BUREAU OF SURVEYS
 PROPERTY LOCATION DIVISION

WARD 16 SECTION 10
 BLOCK 98

SCALE 1" = 50' 0" DATE Oct. 1929.

APPENDIX B

AGENCIES CONTACTED

- a. Association of Community Councils of Metropolitan Chicago, Inc. Chicago.
- b. West Dayton Area Council. Dayton.
- c. Federation of South End Settlements. Boston.
- d. Philadelphia Tuberculosis and Health Association.
- e. East Dayton Community Council. Dayton.
- f. Germantown Settlement. Philadelphia.
- g. Wharton Centre. Philadelphia.
- h. School of Social Work, University of Mich. Ann Arbor.
- i. Department of Sociology, Univ. of Chicago. Chicago.
- j. Philadelphia Housing Association. Philadelphia.
- k. Human Dynamics Laboratory, Univ. of Chicago.
- l. Urban League of St. Louis. St. Louis.
- m. National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, Inc. New York.
- n. Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference. Chicago.
- o. Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council. Chicago.
- p. Industrial Areas Foundation. Chicago.
- q. Germantown Community Council. Philadelphia.
- r. Department of Education. Detroit.
- s. City Plan Commission. Detroit.
- t. Housing and Home Finance Agency.
- u. Director of Urban Programs, Sears, Roebuck and Co. Chicago.
- v. National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. Chicago.

APPENDIX C

PROPOSED LETTER TO AGENCIES

INSIDE ADDRESS

TO:

Your agency has been suggested as a possible resource for statistical data and printed material on the use of block organizations for achieving citizen participation in urban renewal. I would appreciate information dealing with, or related in any way to this subject.

I am a graduate student in the School of Social Work, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, doing field work training with the Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency. Along with my training requirements, I am collecting data for a Master's thesis. The topic on which I have chosen to write is the "Effectiveness of Block Organization as a Method of Eliciting Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal."

What method can best be used to increase citizen participation in urban renewal? While I cannot offer a solution, my purpose for writing this letter is directed toward finding some of the answers.

As a matter of information to you, some of the criteria by which I hope to measure effectiveness of block organizations appear on the enclosed sheet. These are the ten issues around which my study is focused.

Whether your material covers all criteria being studied, or only one of them, I shall be grateful for the help given.

Very truly yours,

APPENDIX D

CRITERIA ON BLOCK ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

1. Can a representative block organization be formed?
2. Can it independently develop acceptable goals in terms of block betterment?
3. Can it work effectively with urban renewal and city officials to achieve its goal?
4. Can it influence or modify urban renewal plans to where they approximate what the resident population believes to be realistically needed in the block?
5. What are the limitations of block organization in terms of program participation or liaison with public officials?
6. What are the strong points that can be the basis of a block organization in an urban renewal setting?
7. What are the lines of demarcation between the community organization worker and other public officials of the urban renewal agency when working with block organizations?
8. What criteria should the block organization use for developing a long range program that will sustain the interest of its members?
9. How can the block organization achieve harmony between owner-occupants and tenants?
10. Identification of Block (Community Organization) Worker's role in achieving the above?

APPENDIX E

BLOCK ORGANIZATION EXPERIENCE SURVEY

DATE _____

A. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Name _____ Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Address _____ Phone _____
3. Ethnic group. (Interviewer will check on the basis of his observation).
 - a. ☐ non-white
 - b. ☐ white
 - c. ☐ other (all non-white other than Negroes).
4. Martial status
 - a. ☐ married
 - b. ☐ single
 - c. ☐ widowed
 - d. ☐ divorced
5. Are you the head of the family? If not, what is your relationship to the family head? _____
6. Does your family occupy the:
 - a. ☐ entire house
 - b. ☐ only one floor
 - c. ☐ an apartment with private bath and kitchen
 - d. ☐ other, please specify: _____
7. How many people live in this dwelling unit?
 - a. ☐ adults
 - b. ☐ children in school
 - c. ☐ children below school age

8. Which of the following statements best describe your family's tenure in this dwelling unit?
- a. ___ have a sale of contract
 - b. ___ renting
 - c. ___ buying
9. How long have you lived in Baltimore City? _____ At this address? _____.
10. How many times have you moved within the past five years?
- a. ___ this question does not apply
 - b. ___ (_____ times)
 - c. ___ no answer
11. What is your religious preference?
- a. ___ Baptist
 - b. ___ Episcopalian
 - c. ___ Lutheran
 - d. ___ Presbyterian
 - e. ___ Methodist
 - f. ___ other protestant, specify: _____
 - g. ___ Catholic
 - h. ___ other, specify: _____
- B. EMPLOYMENT
12. What is the primary occupation of the head of the household?
- _____
13. What is your occupation? (QUESTION DOES NOT APPLY IF HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD IS RESPONDENT)
- _____
14. How many adults other than you live in this dwelling unit are employed outside of the home? _____

C. FAMILIARIZATION WITH URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM FOR BALTIMORE CITY AND SPECIFICALLY IN THE _____ AREA.

15. When did you first learn that Baltimore City had an urban renewal program?

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. ___ this year | d. ___ three years ago |
| b. ___ one year ago | e. ___ four years ago |
| c. ___ two years ago | f. ___ done know or can't recall |

16. Can you recall how you felt on first learning that this part of the city had been designated as an urban renewal area?

- a. ___ very enthusiastic
- b. ___ pleased about it
- c. ___ did not care one way or the other
- d. ___ not such a good idea
- e. ___ very depressed

17. How long have you known that your block was included in the _____ urban renewal area?

- a. ___ (_____)
- b. ___ don't know exactly when it was learned
- c. ___ no answer

18. Would you briefly describe how the urban renewal program will affect your block? _____

19. Do you think the program will be a success?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| a. ___ yes | Reason for answer _____ |
| b. ___ no | _____ |
| c. ___ undecided | _____ |

D. IDENTIFICATION WITH BLOCK (SENSE OF BELONGING)

20. With how many families in this block does your family have friendly relations?
- a. ___ none
 - b. ___ (___ to ___)
 - c. ___ no answer
21. How many different families are you acquainted with that live in this block?
- a. ___ (___ families)
 - b. ___ no answer
22. Has there been any noticable changes to your block during the past five years? If so, in what way has the block been affected?
(ANSWER NOT READ TO INTERVIEWEE)
- a. ___ block as good now as it was when moved here
 - b. ___ block has become a better place
 - c. ___ the area is going down
 - d. ___ aware of some problems, but believe residents can solve them
 - e. ___ block has many problems that are too big for residents to handle
 - f. ___ no answer
23. Which of the following statements best describe your membership in the block club?
- a. ___ dues paying member, but has not taken an active part in club activities
 - b. ___ dues paying member, attend meetings regularly and has worked on some projects for the block club
 - c. ___ attend meetings occasionally, but have not found club activities to be of interest
 - d. ___ never has much to say in meetings, but so far have gone along with the program
 - e. ___ other, specify: _____

24. In what part of the block organization's program have you participated? _____
- _____
- _____

25. Please identify some accomplishments of the block club.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

26. What changes would you suggest that would improve the block club program? _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

E. REACTIONS TO BLOCK CLUB LEADERSHIP

27. Would you volunteer to work on a project for the block club?

a. _____ yes

b. _____ no

c. _____ other, please specify: _____

28. If your block club were to hold an election of officers at the next meeting, which of the present officers do you think would be re-elected?

	yes	no
a. _____ president	_____	_____
b. _____ vice pres.	_____	_____
c. _____ secretary	_____	_____
d. _____ treasurer	_____	_____

29. In which leadership capacity do you feel most capable of serving?

30. Have you ever been nominated to run for an office in your block club?

a. ☐ yes

b. ☐ no

c. ☐ no answer

INTERVIEWERS COMMENTS

SIGNATURE

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